



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■



Adding User Value: Research and Adaptation to Enhance User Experience

Speakers:

Julian Robinson, Director of Estates, LSE

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Context

Our Estate



32 Buildings

179,708.3 Campus GIA (m2)

13,728 Students

391 Estates Staff

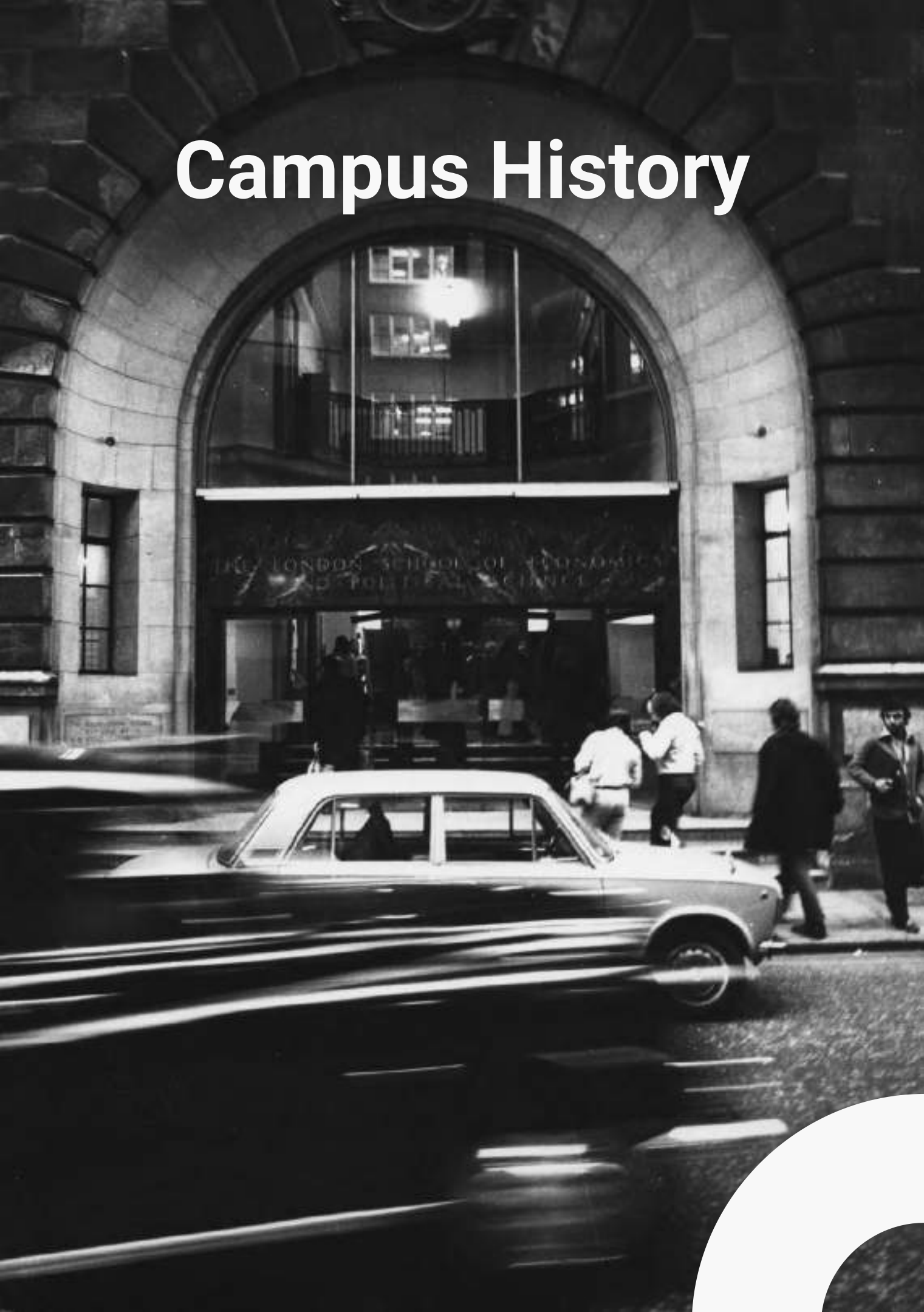
**£35 million Estates Revenue
Budget**

**£1.5 billion Capital Value of
the Estate**

“An institution on which concrete never sets.”

William Beveridge, LSE Director (1919 – 1937)

Campus History



1895 LSE is founded and located at 9 John Adams Street.

1896 LSE Library is founded.

1919 William Beveridge is appointed Director.

1920 King George V lays the foundation stone for the Old Building.

1945 LSE returns to London after evacuating during WW2.

1978 LSE Library moves to the former WHSmith&Co headquarters.

2000 LSE raises £100 million for campus renovations.

2003 LSE purchases 24 Kingsway.

2010 LSE purchases 32 Lincoln's Inn Fields.

2014 LSE acquires 44 Lincoln's Inn Fields.

2014 Saw Swee Hock Building opens.

2019 Centre Building opens.

2021 Marshall Building opens.

2022 LSE acquires 35 Lincoln's Inn Fields.

2025 LSE acquires 61 Aldwych

Estates Strategy

Our aim is to create and maintain a world-class estate which enhances the student, staff, and visitor experience.

Support

Offer every first-year student a bed space by 2030.

Create an inclusive, accessible, safe, and vibrant campus that fosters wellbeing and belonging.

Enhance

Continue to enhance LSE's global reputation through world-class estate design and management.

Continue development and engagement around Lincoln's Inn Fields and pursue strategic property acquisitions.

Preserve

Respect and enhance historic buildings.

Deliver the School's carbon reduction targets and pathway to NET zero.

Protect investment in new buildings through proactive facilities management.

Deliver

Seek the best value in capital development, estate services and maintenance work.

Create a well-maintained estate that supports LSE's long-term strategic goals.

Create

Support Future Ways of Working.

Apply space norms consistently across the School.

Insight + action
informed by research

*“I need to know
what students think
about the campus.”*

2011

2015

2019

2023

First conceived as baseline research

>>> the time series studies followed

... f2f research / big samples / rich quantitative + qualitative data

... in each of the years + across the suite

A structured lens on impact of extensive physical transformation

... intertwined with LSE's growth + socio-cultural + digital change

Year	Student headcount
2010-11	9,749
2015-16	10,048
2019-20	11,118
2023-24	12,496

Modal shifts – digital + in person

Student perceptions of themselves as customers

Wanting value for money

Students' No 1 issue in 2011: lack of study space

... response was detailed briefing on students' needs for study space



... Lots of study space delivered since
... no longer all in the Library

*“Nice that there’s diversity of different spaces.
You can go to the Library and use the resources,
but there’re also places with different lighting + atmosphere
... I can choose what works best for me on that day.”*

LSE now has significant new learning commons, but diversity matters:

... some students prefer less expansive / more contained settings



Loose fit / low cost solutions promote choice:

... in routes / nooks / pockets across the campus

Scales of adaptation:

creating this plaza relied on demolishing existing departmental space



Less of the most articulated requirement / departmental space ...

more of new, valuable usage enhancing connectivity + campus experience

Upgraded teaching spaces



The new Marshall + Centre Buildings

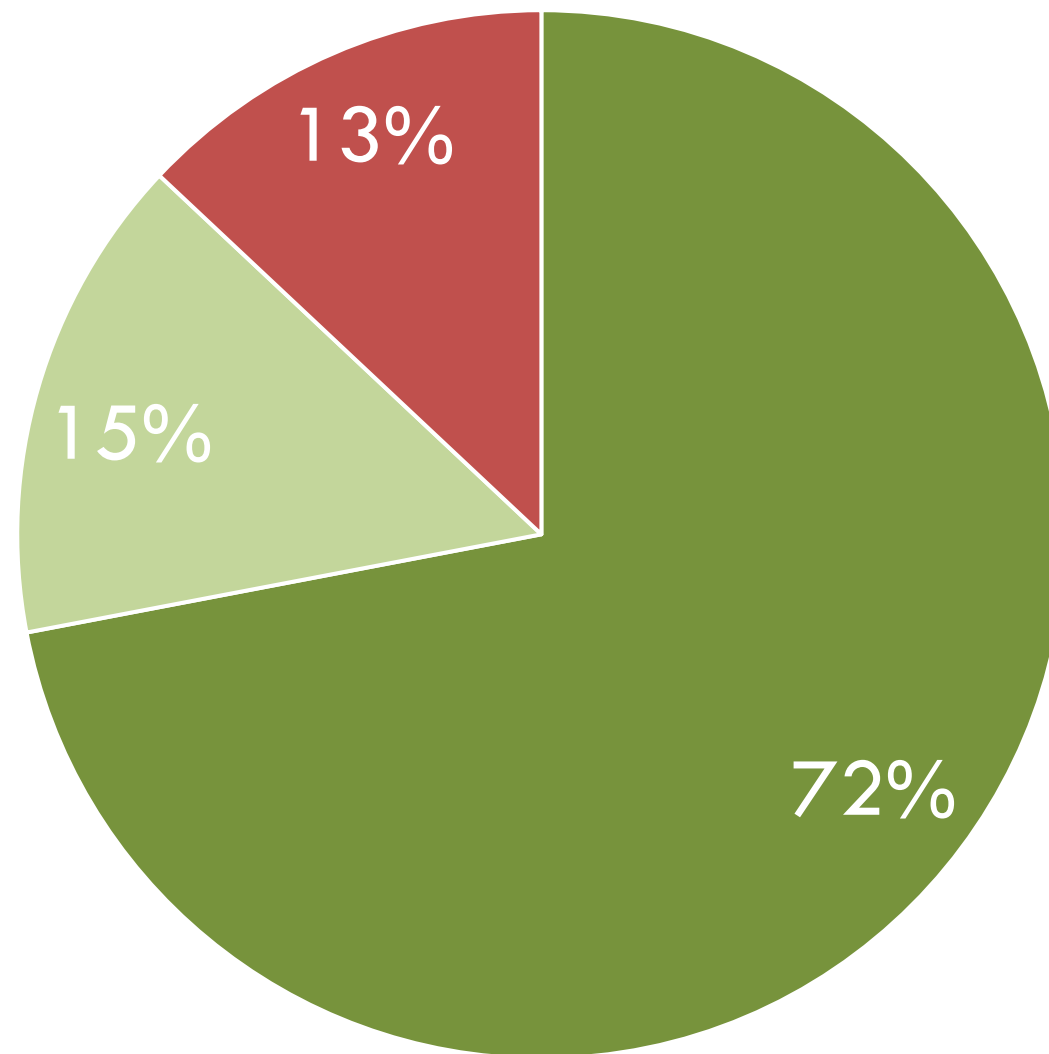
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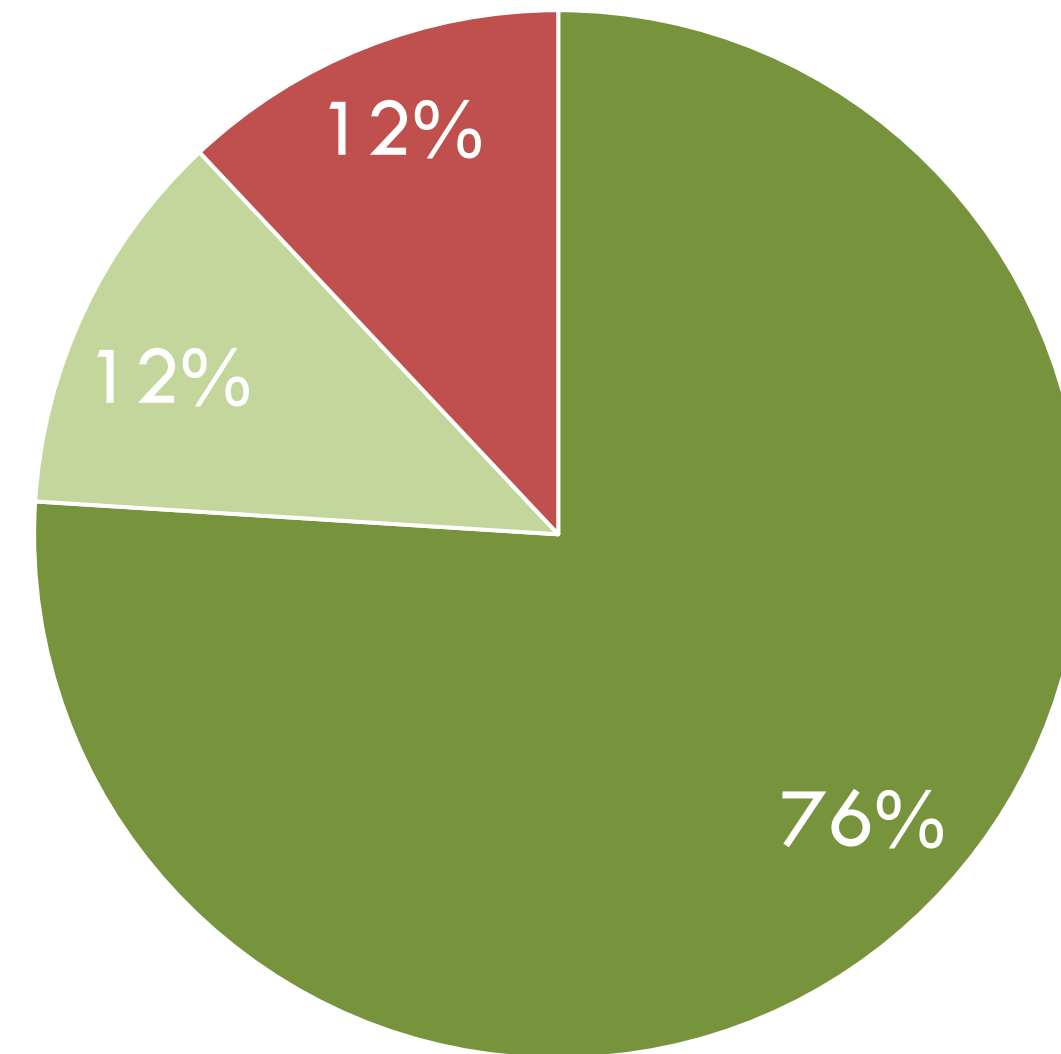
Adapted teaching rooms in legacy buildings

Post Occupancy Evaluation results: student experience

Marshall Building:
all aspects



Teaching spaces in six legacy buildings:
aggregate results



■ Positive ■ OK ■ Negative

Adapted common spaces:

student common rooms in departmental space + shared facilities



Outdoor seating ... much appreciated



... students would like even more

... And greenery



“I’ve been there a lot – often go after class. The garden’s a very nice social place – I love the area.”

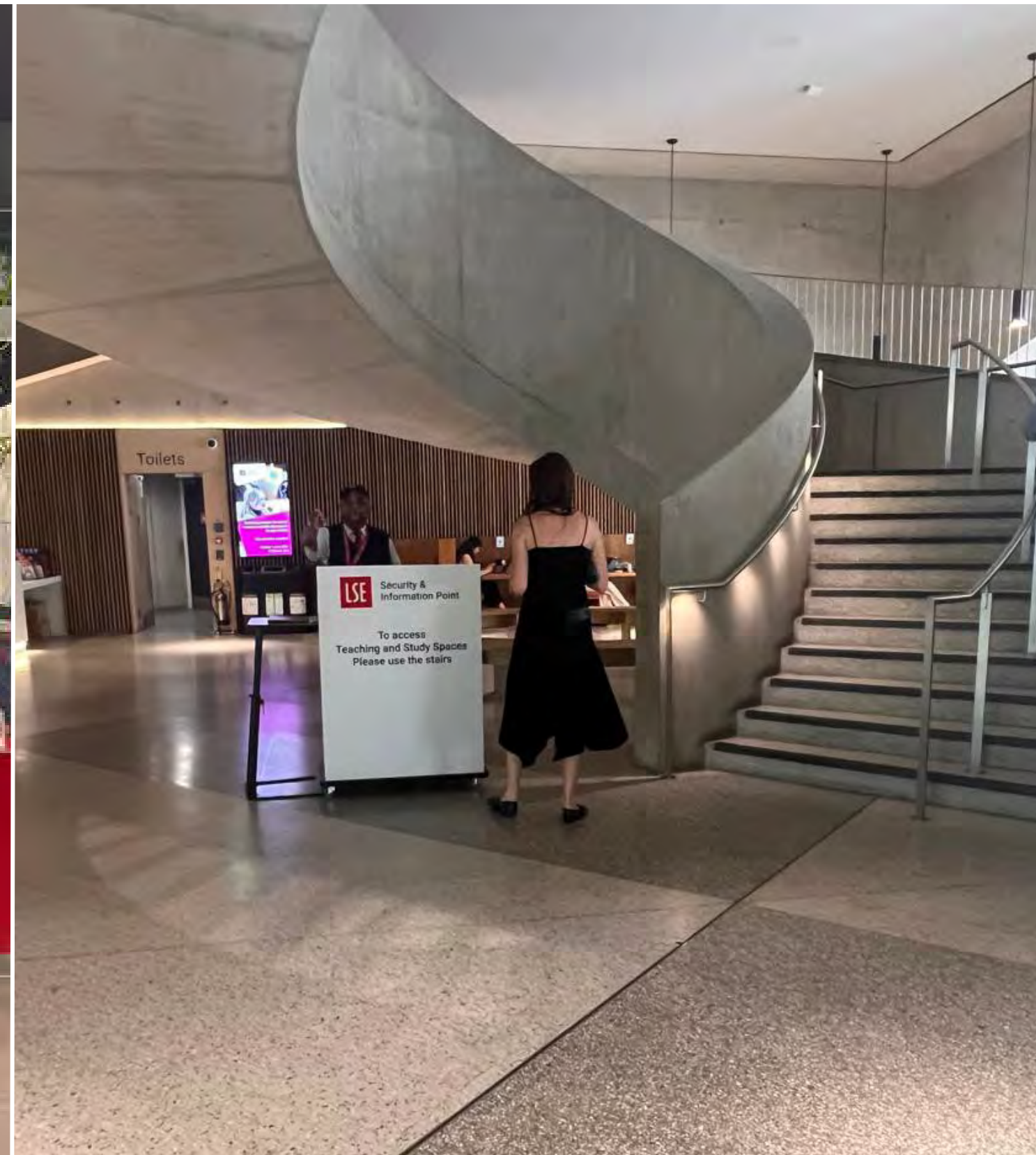
“I feel like I’m in a student movie when everyone goes there after class or to eat lunch.”

But students also want greenery **right there on campus!**



So, planting ... outdoors / indoors / both

Not just hardware: investment in culture for people to feel safe + welcome



A right balance ... neither 'too lax' / 'too strict':
staff tone matters more than ever in these challenging times

... and all the practical touchpoints that matter to users

2011 vs 2023: turnaround in students' views of FM + support infrastructure



“It’s very obvious that they invest a lot in good quality interiors + a lot of space for everyone.

Here’s there’s space for everything + well looked after space.”

Result: increased student endorsement of the campus
... strong perception as LSE



... alongside public enjoyment

Evidencing that campus quality matters in student choice of university

“It was one of my deciding factors in picking a university following Instagram accounts.”

“The classes + teachers are most important, but the campus is an asset of the School + I like it very much.” “It shapes a lot of the feelings about LSE.”

Verdict 2023

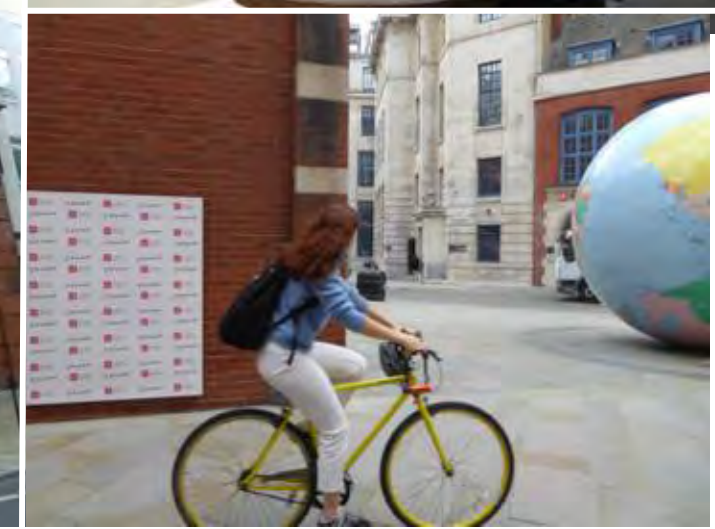
96% of students reported that the design + quality of LSE's campus exceeded or matched their expectations

“It's part of the experience + I came with a high expectation.

LSE sells itself as very cool + it's in line with or above my expectations.

It's a very expensive experience + it does the job!

Responding to the 'old vs new gap' flagged by the research: a comprehensive review of campus infrastructure to 'level up'



Identified touchpoints to enhance student experience
... building by building // floor by floor // all external zones

And ZZA's most recent research to heighten Estates' strategic aims:
scope of physical infrastructure to promote wellbeing on campus



In praise of small moves

... less watchfulness + negotiation / lower risk



The incremental gains scale positive user impact

Shifting the dial on student experience

Enhancing appreciation of Estates Division

Less is more:

high impact / low value interventions
- sub £100k

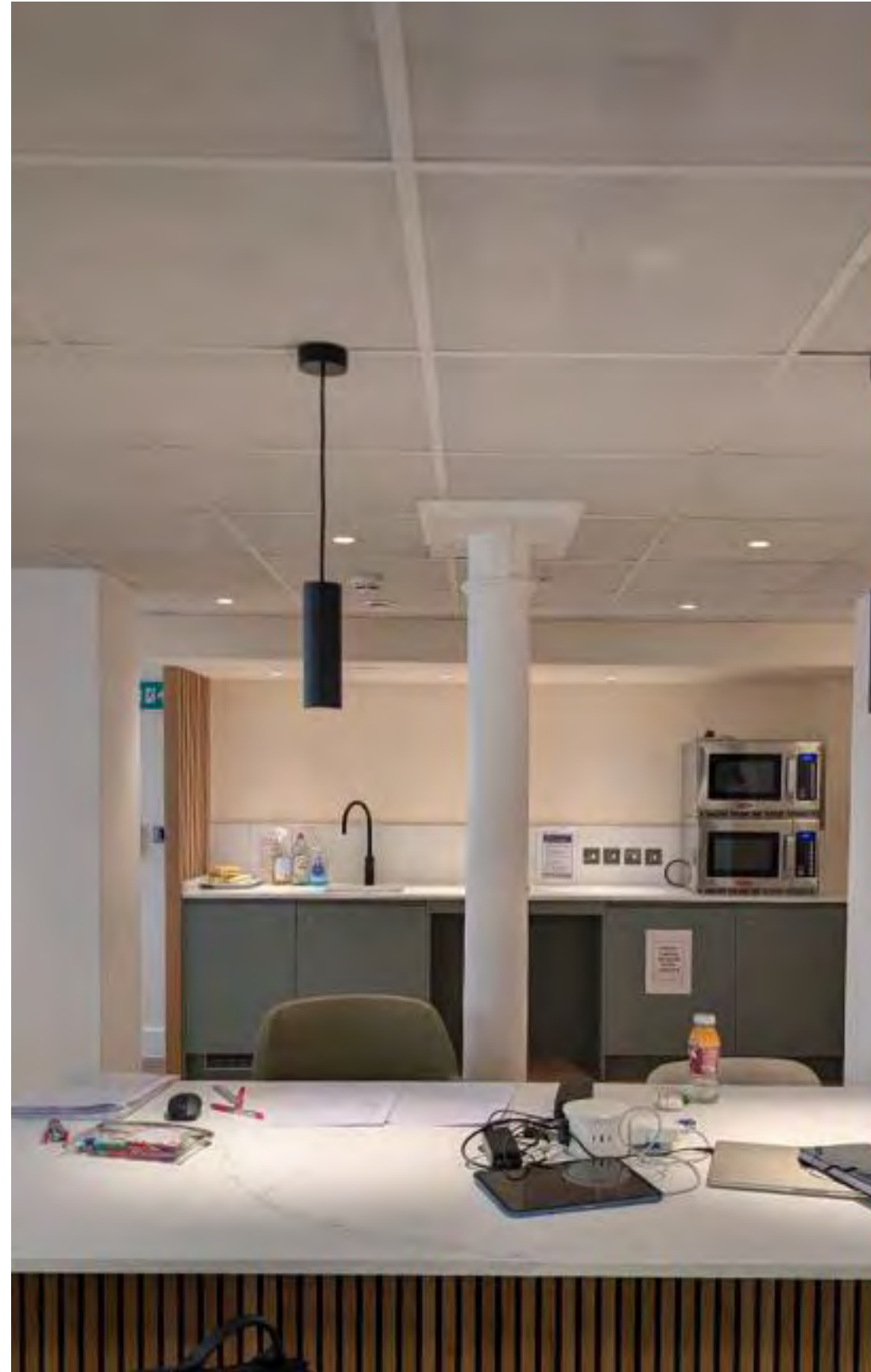
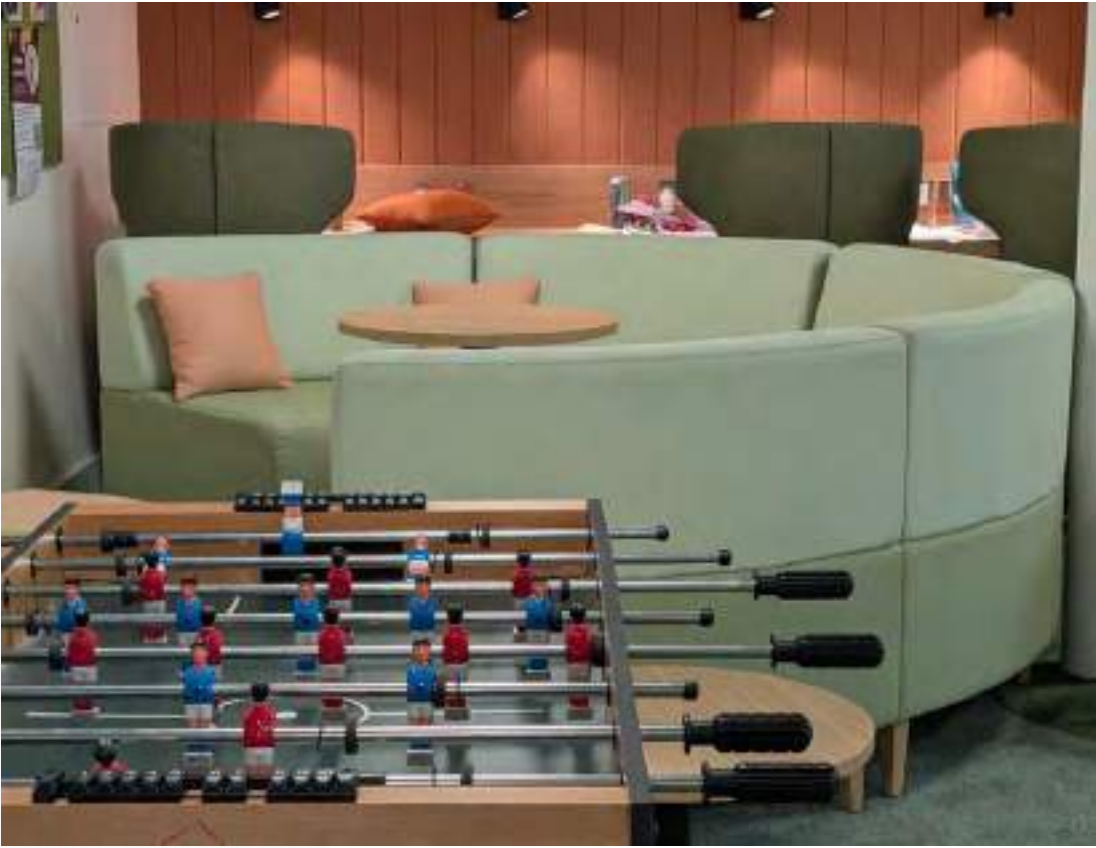
Campus Greening



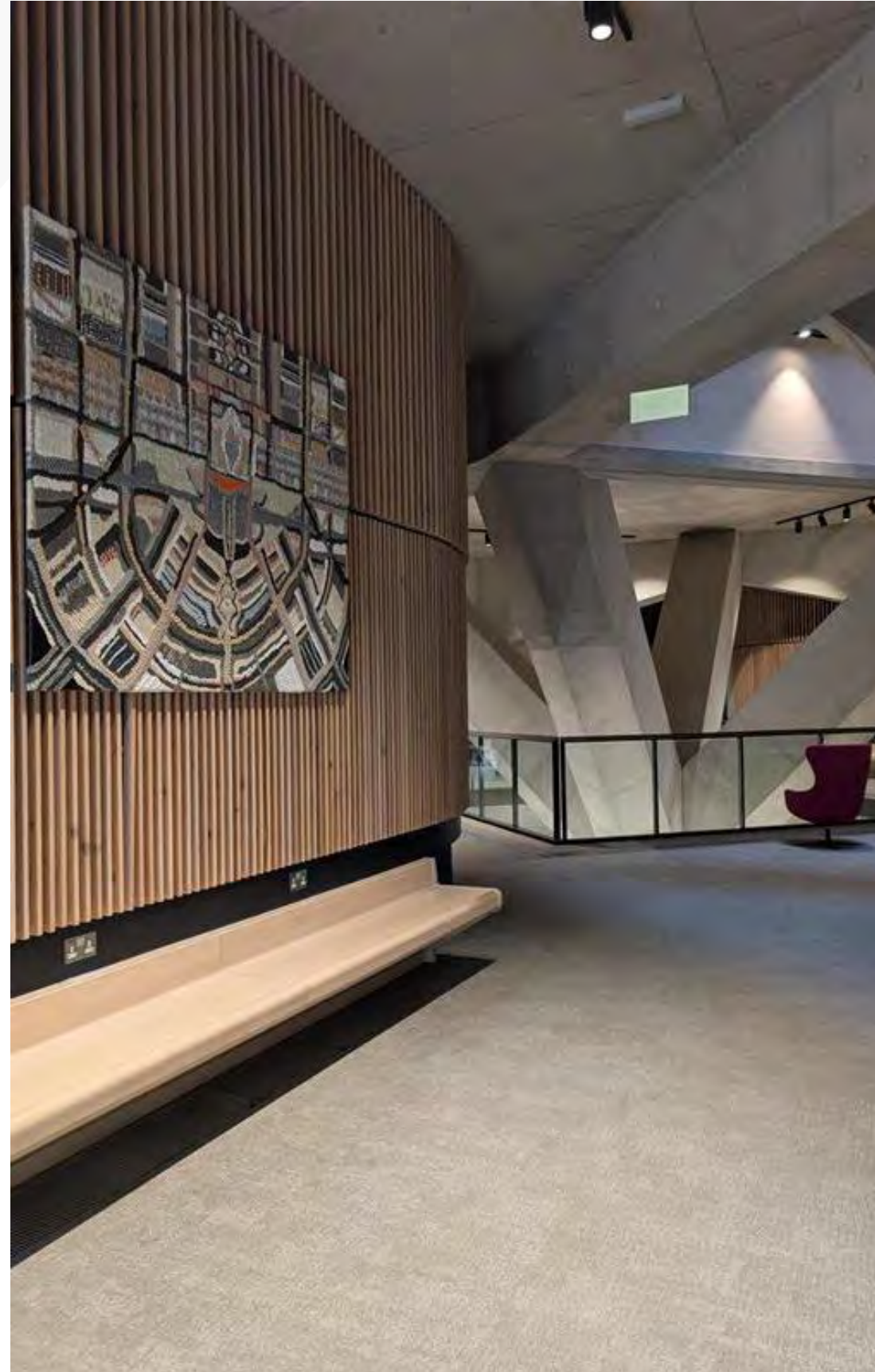
Common Areas



Shared facilities including food prep



Artwork



Takeaways

Commission research on campus quality to get an independent users' view

Leverage good data to inform investment decisions and strengthen funding bids

Help prioritize and scope programmes to rework problematic areas

Follow up research on opportunities to mitigate 'them and us' perceptions

Then track / learn from the effectiveness of the changes delivered

Value of thoughtful, structured data collection informing meaningful interventions to enhance study, learning and campus experience, and sentiments to the institution

Last word



“As an undergrad, postgrad, and serving two annual terms as General Secretary of the SU, I’ve witnessed the incredible transformation of the estate, and the wonderful customer service ethos of Estates staff. They’re fully committed to supporting and enhancing student experience...”

Tito Molokwu, General Secretary, LSE SU